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ESSAY

ON

MAN.

IN

*EPISTLES to a FRIEND.*

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THE SECOND EDITION.

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PART I.

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L O N D O N :

Printed for J. Wilford, at the Three Flower-de-luces, behind the Chapter-house, St. Pauls.

[Price One Shilling.]

[1732]

E S S A Y

ON

M A N

IN

EPISTLES TO FRIEND



The Second Edition.

P A R T I

L O N D O N :

Printed for J. Johnson, at the Three Pigeons, St. Pauls Church-yard, St. Pauls.

[Price One Shilling]





TO THE  
**R E A D E R.**

**A***S the Epistolary Way of Writing hath prevailed much of late, we have ventured to publish this Piece composed some Time since, and whose Author chose this Manner, notwithstanding his Subject was high and of dignity, because of its being mixt with Argument, which of its Nature approacheth Prose. This, which we first give the Reader treats of the Nature and State of MAN, with*



*respect to the UNIVERSAL SYSTEM; the rest will treat of him with Respect to his OWN SYSTEM, as an Individual, and as a Member of Society; under one or other of which Heads all Ethics are included.*

*As he imitates no Man, so he would be thought to vye with no Man in these Epistles, particularly with the noted Author of TWO lately published: But this he may most surely say, that the Matter of them is such, as is of Importance to all in general, and of Offence to none in particular.*







A N  
E S S A Y on M A N.

I. N  
*EPISTLES* to a *FRIEND*.



W A K E! my LÆLIUS, leave all meaner  
Things  
To low Ambition and the Pride of  
Kings.

Let Us (since Life can little more supply  
Than just to look about us, and to die)  
Expatriate free, o'er all this *scene of Man*;  
A mighty Maze! of Walks without a Plan;  
Or wild, where weeds and flowers promiscuous shoot;  
Or Garden, tempting with forbidden fruit.



*E P I S T L E S.*

Together let us beat this ample *Field*,  
Try what the open, what the covert, yield ; 10  
The latent tracts, or giddy heights explore,  
Of all who blindly creep, or fightless soar.  
Eye Nature's walks ; shoot Folly as it flie's,  
And catch the Manners, living as they rise ;  
Laugh where we *must* ; be candid where we *can* ; 15  
But vindicate the *Ways* of *God* to Man.

Say first, of *God* above, or *Man* below,  
What can we *reason*, but from what we *know* ?  
Of Man, what see we but his Station here,  
From which to reason, or to which refer ? 20  
Thro' Worlds unbounded tho' the God be known ;  
'Tis ours to trace him, only in our own.  
Of this vast Frame the Bearings, and the Ties,  
The strong Connections, nice Dependencies,  
And Centres just, has thy pervading Soul 25  
Look'd thro' ? Or can a part contain the Whole ?  
Is the great Chain that draws all to agree,  
And drawn supports, upheld by God, or thee ?



He who thro' vast Immensity can pierce,  
See Worlds on Worlds compose one Universe, 30  
Observe how System into System runs,  
What other Planets, and what other Suns,  
What vary'd Being peoples ev'ry Star;  
May tell, why Heav'n has made us as we are.

When the proud Steed shall know, why Man restrains  
His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains; (35  
When the dull Ox, why now he breaks the clod,  
Now wears a Garland, an Ægyptian God;  
Then shall Man's pride and dulness comprehend  
His Action's, Passion's, Being's, Use and End; 40  
Why doing, suff'ring, check'd, impell'd; and why  
This hour a Slave, the next a Deity?

Presumptuous Man! the Reason wouldst thou find,  
Why made so weak, so little, and so blind?  
First, if thou can'st, the harder reason guess, 45  
Why made no weaker, blinder, and no less?  
Ask of thy Mother Earth, why Oaks are made  
Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade?



Or ask of yonder argent fields above,  
Why Jove's Satellites are less than Jove? 50

Of Systems possible, if 'tis confest  
That Wisdom infinite must form the *Best*,  
Where all must full or not coherent be,  
And all that rises, rise in due degree;  
Then, in the scale of Life and Sence, 'tis plain 55  
There must be, *some where*, such a Rank as Man;  
And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)  
Is only this, if God has *plac'd* him wrong?

Respecting *Man* whatever wrong we call,  
May, must be right, as relative to *All*. 60

In human works, tho' labour'd on with pain,  
A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;  
In God's, one single can *its End* produce,  
Yet ferves to second too some *other Use*.  
So Man, who here seems principal alone, 65  
Perhaps acts second to some Sphere unknown,  
Touches some Wheel, or verges to some Gole;  
'Tis but a Part we see, and not a Whole.



Then say not Man's imperfect, Heav'n in fault ;  
Say rather, Man's as perfect as he ought : 70  
His being measur'd to his state, and place,  
His time a Moment, and a Point his space.

Heav'n from all creatures hides the book of Fate,  
All but the page prescrib'd, their *present state* ;  
From Brutes what Men, from Men what Spirits know ;  
Or who could suffer Being here below ? [75

The Lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to day,  
Had he thy *Reason*, would he skip and play ?  
Pleas'd to the last, he crops the flow'ry food,  
And licks the hand just rais'd to shed his blood. 80

Oh blindness to the future ! kindly giv'n,  
That each may fill the Circle mark'd by Heav'n,  
Who sees with equal eye, as God of All,  
A Hero perish, or a Sparrow fall,  
Atoms, or Systems, into ruin hurl'd, 85  
And now a Bubble burst, and now a World !

Hope humbly then, with trembling pinions soar ;  
Wait the great teacher, Death, and God adore !



What blifs above, he gives not thee to know,  
But gives that *Hope* to be thy blifs below. 90  
Hope fprings eternal in the human breast;  
Man never *is*, but always *to be* bleft.  
The foul uneasy, and confin'd at home,  
Refts, and expatiates, in a life to come.  
If to be perfect in a certain ftate, 95  
What matter, here or there, or foon or late?  
Safe in the hand of one difpofing Pow'r,  
Or in the natal, or the mortal hour:  
And he that's blefs'd to day, as fully fo,  
As who began ten thoufand years ago. 100

Lo! the poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind  
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;  
His foul, proud Science never taught to ftay  
Far as the Solar walk, or Milky way;  
Yet fimple Nature to his hope has giv'n 105  
Behind the cloud-topt hill an humbler Heav'n,  
Some fafer world in depth of woods embrac'd,  
Some happier ifland in the watry wafte,



Where Slaves once more their native land behold,  
No Fiends torment, nor Christians thirst for Gold. 110

But does he say, the Maker is not *good*,  
Till he's exalted to what state he wou'd?  
Himself alone high Heav'n's peculiar care;  
Alone made happy, when he will, and where?  
To *be*, contents his natural desire, 115  
He asks no Angel's wing or Seraph's fire,  
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky  
His faithful Dog shall bear him company.  
Go, wiser Thou! and in thy scale of sense  
Weigh thy *Opinion* against *Providence*: 120

Call Imperfection what thou fancy'st such,  
Pronounce HE acts too little, or too much;  
Destroy all Creatures for thy sport or gust,  
Yet thou unhappy, think 'tis He's unjust;  
Snatch from his hand the Balance and the Rod; 125  
Re-judge his Justice, Be the GOD of GOD!

In *Pride* (my Friend) in *Pride*, our error lies;  
All quit their sphere, and rush into the Skies.



Pride still is aiming at the blest abodes,  
Men would be Angels, Angels would be Gods. 130  
Aspiring to be Gods, if Angels fell,  
Aspiring to be Angels, Men rebell:  
And who but wishes to invert the Laws  
Of ORDER, sins against th' Eternal Cause.

Ask for what end the heav'nly bodies shine? 135  
Earth for whose use? *Pride* answers, " 'Tis for mine:  
For me kind Nature wakes her genial pow'r,  
Suckles each herb, and spreads out ev'ry flow'r;  
Annual for me, the grape, the rose renew  
The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew; 140  
For me, the mine a thousand treasures brings,  
For me, health gushes from a thousand springs;  
Seas roll to waft me, suns to light me rise,  
My footstool Earth, my canopy the Skies!

But errs not Nature from this gracious end, 145  
From burning suns when livid deaths descend,  
When earthquakes swallow, or when tempests sweep  
Towns to one grave, a Nation to the deep?



Blame we for this the wise Almighty Cause?

“ No ('tis reply'd) he acts by *gen'ral Laws*; 150

“ Th' exceptions few ; some change since all began;

“ And what created, perfect? ”---Why then *Man*?

If the great end be human Happiness,

And Nature deviates ; how can Man do less?

Nature as much a constant course requires 155

Of show'rs and sunshine, as of man's desires,

As much eternal springs and cloudless skies,

As men for ever temp'rate, calm, and wise.

If Plagues or Earthquakes break not Heav'n's design,

Why then a Borgia or a Catiline? 160

From Pride, from Pride, our very reas'ning springs;

Account for moral, as for nat'ral things :

Why charge we Heav'n in those, in these acquit?

In both, to reason right is to submit.

Better for Us, perhaps, it might appear, 165

Were there all Harmony, all Virtue here;

That never Air or Ocean felt the wind;

That never Passion discompos'd the mind:



But all subsists by Elemental strife;  
And Passions are the Elements of Life. 170  
The gen'ral ORDER, since the whole began,  
Is kept in *Nature*, and is kept in *Man*.

What would this Man? now upward will he soar,  
And little less than Angel would be more;  
Now looking downward, just as griev'd appears 175  
To want the strength of Bulls, the Fur of Bears.  
Made for his use all Creatures if he call,  
Say what their use, had he the pow'rs of all?

Nature to each, without profusion kind,  
The proper organs, proper pow'rs assign'd, 180  
Each seeming want compensated of course,  
Here, due degrees of Swiftnefs; there, of Force;  
Each Beast, each Insect, happy as it can;  
Is Heav'n unkind to nothing but to Man?  
So justly all proportion'd to each state, 185  
Nothing to add, and nothing to abate:  
Shall Man, shall reasonable Man, alone,  
Be, or endow'd with all, or pleas'd with none?



Thro' gen'ral Life, behold the Scale arise  
 Of *sensual*, and of *mental* Faculties. 190  
 Vast Range of Sense! from Man's imperial race  
 To the green Myriads in the peopled Grass!  
 What modes of sight, betwixt each wide extreme,  
 The Mole's dim curtain, and the Lynx's beam:  
 Of smell, the headlong Lions between, 195  
 And Hound, sagacious on the tainted green!  
 Of hearing, from the Life that fills the flood,  
 To that which warbles thro' the vernal wood.  
 In the nice Bee, what sense so subtly true  
 From pois'nous herbs extracts the healing dew: 200  
 The Spider's touch, how exquisitely fine,  
 Feels at each thread, and lives along the line.  
 How *Instinct* varies! what a Hog may want,  
 Compar'd with thine, half-reas'ning Elephant!  
 Twixt that, and *Reason*, what a nice Barrier, 205  
 For ever sep'rate, yet for ever near.  
 Remembrance, and Reflection, how ally'd!  
 What thin partitions Sense from Thought divide



And middle Natures, how they long to join,  
 Yet never pass th' insuperable Line! 210  
 Without this just *Gradation*, could they be  
 Subjected these to those, or all to thee?  
 The Pow'rs of all subdu'd by thee alone,  
 Is not thy Reason all those pow'rs in one?

The blifs of Man (could Pride that blessing find) 215  
 Is, not to know, or think, *beyond* Mankind;  
 No self-confounding Faculties to share;  
 No Senses stronger than his brain can bear.  
 Why has not Man a microscopic eye?  
 For this plain reason, Man is not a Fly: 220  
 What the advantage, if his finer eyes  
 Study a Mite, not comprehend the Skies?  
 His Touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,  
 To smart, and agonize at ev'ry pore?  
 Or quick Effluvia darting thro' his brain, 225  
 Dye of a Rose, in Aromatic pain?  
 If Nature thunder'd in his opening ears,  
 And stunn'd him with the music of the Spheres,



EPISTLES.

How would he wish, that Heav'n had left him still  
The whisp'ring Zephyr, and the purling Rill? 230  
Who finds not Providence all-good and wise,  
Alike in what it gives, and what denies?

See, thro' this Air, this Ocean, and this Earth,  
All Nature quick, and bursting into birth.  
Above, how high progressive life may go? 235  
Around how wide? how deep extend below?  
Vast Chain of Being! which from God began,  
Ethereal Essence, Spirit, Substance, Man,  
Beast, Bird, Fish, Insect! what no Eye can see,  
No Glass can reach! from Infinite to Thee! 240  
From Thee to Nothing!----- On superior Pow'rs  
Were we to press, inferior might on ours;  
Or in the full Creation leave a Void,  
Where one step broken, the great Scale's destroy'd:  
From Nature's Chain whatever Link you strike, 245  
Tenth, or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.

And if each System in Gradation roll,  
Alike essential to th' amazing Whole;



*E P I S T L E S.*

The least confusion but in one, not all  
That System only, but the whole must fall. 250  
All this dread Order, shall it break? For thee?  
Vile Worm! --- O Madnefs! Pride! Impiety!

What if the Foot, ordain'd the dust to tread,  
Or Hand to toil, aspir'd to be the Head?  
What if the Head, the eye or ear, repin'd 255  
To serve mere Engines to the ruling Mind?  
Just as absurd, for any Part to claim  
To be another, in this gen'ral Frame :  
Just as absurd, to mourn the tasks or pains,  
The great directing MIND of ALL ordains. 260

All are but parts of one stupendous Whole :  
Whose Body *Nature* is, and *God* the Soul.  
That, chang'd thro' all and yet in all the same,  
Great in the Earth as in th' Ætherial frame,  
Warms in the Sun, refreshes in the Breeze, 265  
Glow's in the Stars, and blossoms in the Trees,  
Lives thro' all Life, extends thro' all extent,  
Spreads undivided, operates unspent,



# E P I S T L E

Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,  
As full, as perfect, in a hair, as heart, 27  
As full, as perfect, in vile Man that mourns,  
As the rapt Seraphim, that sings and burns;  
To Him no high, no low, no great, no small;  
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

Cease then, nor ORDER *Imperfection* name: 275  
Our proper blifs depends on what we blame.  
Know thy own *Point*. This just, this kind degree  
Of blindness, weakness, Heav'n bestows on thee.  
Submit ---- in this, or any other Sphere,  
Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear. 280  
All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;  
All Chance, Direction which thou canst not see;  
All Discord, Harmony not understood;  
All partial Evil, universal Good:  
And spight of Pride, and in thy Reason's spight, 28  
One truth is clear; "Whatever Is, is RIGHT."

# F I N I S.



